

Message Text

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SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-01 TRSE-00

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AF-06 NEA-09 EURE-00 BIB-01 IO-10 SAM-01 /115 W

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P R 071916Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5642

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 00430

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE -- DECEMBER

REF: A) PARIS 29418; B) PARIS 31015; C) PARIS 30570;

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D) PARIS 30302; E) PARIS 29317; F) PARIS 24467;

G) PARIS 31250

SUMMARY: MAJOR EVENTS IN FOREIGN POLICY ECLIPSED AND INFLUENCED THE FRENCH INTERNAL SCENE IN DECEMBER. FRENCHMEN GENERALLY APPEAR TO APPROVE GISCARD'S ROLE IN LAST MONTH'S THREE SUMMIT CONFERENCES AND HIS GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF AGGRESSIVELY SEEKING ORDERS FOR FRENCH INDUSTRY IN THE OIL-PRODUCING STATES. THE INFLATION RATE MAY HAVE EASED SLIGHTLY, AND THE TRADE BALANCE, TEMPORARILY AT LEAST, LOOKED A LITTLE HEALTHIER. LABOR TROUBLES WERE FEW. PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC SEIZED CONTROL OF THE GAULLIST PARTY. A LEFT-SPONSORED ATTEMPT TO PASS A MOTION OF CENSURE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT FAILED AS EXPECTED IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. GISCARD IS SAID TO BE CONTEMPLATING A CABINET RESHUFFLE' BUT AT MONTH'S END, HE COULD LOOK BACK UPON A REASONABLY SATISFACTORY DECEMBER PERFORMANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. FRENCH DIPLOMACY DOMINATES EVENTS: IN CONTRAST TO NOVEMBER'S LABOR TURMOILS AND BAD ECONOMIC NEWS (REF A), DECEMBER PROVED TO BE A RELATIVELY TRANQUIL MONTH IN FRENCH POLITICS. UNUSUALLY MILD WEATHER AND A DOSE OF CHRISTMAS SPIRIT HELPED EASE DOMESTIC TENSIONS. MORE IMPORTANT, PERHAPS, WAS THE SEEMING APPROVAL WITH WHICH FRENCHMEN WATCHED THEIR PRESIDENT EXERCISE SUMMIT DIPLOMACY. AS GISCARD HOSTED BREZHNEV AT RAMBOUILLET, PRESIDED OVER THE PARIS CONFERENCE OF EC CHIEFS OF GOVERNMENT, AND TALKED WITH PRESIDENT FORD IN MARTINIQUE, FRANCE APPEARED ONCE AGAIN TO BE PLAYING A MAJOR ROLE IN THE ORDERING OF THE WORLD. SUCH SUCCESSFUL SUMMITRY WAS ENOUGH TO COOL THE CRITICISM OF EVEN THE MOST ARDENT GAULLISTS, ONLY A FEW OF WHOM RAISED THEIR VOICES IN PROTEST OVER THE FRANCO-AMERICAN GOODWILL RADIATING FROM THE CARIBBEAN. MOREOVER, MEMBERS OF GISCARD'S GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN MAKING A "HAJJ", ORDER-BOOKS IN HAND, TO THE NEWLY-RICH OIL PRODUCING STATES. MOST RECENTLY, PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC RETURNED FROM TEHRAN DECEMBER 23 WITH SEVEN BILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF POTENTIAL ORDERS FOR A SUBWAY SYSTEM FOR TEHRAN, TRAINS, SHIPS, NUCLEAR-ENERGY PLANTS, AN AUTOMOBILE FACTORY, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE FRENCH COLOR TELEVISION PROCESS (SECAM) AND OTHER EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES. TOGETHER WITH EARLIER DEALS WITH ALGERIA, IRAQ, AND EGYPT, CHIRAC'S IRANIAN SELLING EXPEDITION PRESENTED AN IMAGE OF A GOVERNMENT AGGRESSIVELY SEEKING TO OFFSET THE INCREASED OIL IMPORTATION BILL BY SECURING BIG FOREIGN ORDERS FOR FRENCH INDUSTRY (AND AT THE SAME TIME, PROTECTING FRENCH JOBS).

2. GOOD ECONOMIC NEWS: GISCARD COULD ALSO POINT TO A COUPLE OF STATISTICS RELEASED IN DECEMBER AS SUGGESTING THAT FRANCE IS MAKING SOME PROGRESS IN TACKLING ITS INFLATION AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PROBLEMS. THE TRADE DEFICIT DROPPED TO A SEASONALLY-ADJUSTED 218 MILLION FRANCS IN NOVEMBER, A CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENT OVER THE OCTOBER DEFICIT OF 1.5 BILLION. THE OVERALL TRADE DEFICIT FOR THE FIRST ELEVEN MONTHS OF 1974 STANDS AT 17.1 BILLION FRANCS, PROMISING A TOTAL 1974 DEFICIT WELL BELOW THE 22 BILLION FORECAST LAST SUMMER (REF B). THE INFLATION RATE IN NOVEMBER LEVELED OFF SOMEWHAT TO 0.9 PERCENT, DOWN FROM OCTOBER'S 1.2 PERCENT (THE RATE OF INFLATION OVER THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS NOW STANDS AT 14.9 PERCENT).

3. GISCARD'S POPULARITY STABILIZES: IT REMAINS TO BE

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P R 071916Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5643

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 04 PARIS 00430

SEEN WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT'S GOALS OF MAINTAINING
ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT LEVELS WHILE CONTINUING
TO FIGHT INFLATION THROUGH A TIGHT FISCAL POLICY AND
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A CREDIT SQUEEZE ARE BOTH REALIZABLE OVER THE LONG HAUL.
BUSINESS SURVEYS SUGGEST THAT FRANCE'S ECONOMIC DOWNTURN
IS CONTINUING. BUT DECEMBER'S DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY --
MUCH OF IT ECONOMIC IN PURPOSE -- AND A FEW CAUTIOUSLY
HOPEFUL STATISTICS SEEMED TO HELP THE GOVERNMENT IN THE
PUBLIC OPINION POLLS. THE DOWNWARD SLIDE OF GISCARD'S
POPULARITY APPEARED AT LEAST TEMPORARILY HALTED AS THE
RESPECTED "IFOP" POLL PUBLISHED AT THE END OF THE MONTH
SHOWED 48 PERCENT OF THOSE QUESTIONED TO BE SATISFIED
WITH THE PRESIDENT'S PERFORMANCE -- THE SAME FIGURE
REGISTERED IN NOVEMBER. ANOTHER POLL INDICATED 50
PERCENT OF FRENCHMEN WERE CONFIDENT THAT GISCARD COULD
SUCCESSFULLY HANDLE A CRISIS COMPARABLE TO THAT OF
MAY, 1968 -- ONLY 42 PERCENT EXPRESSED THE SAME
CONFIDENCE IN NOVEMBER.

4. LABOR SCENE QUIET: IN CONTRAST TO NOVEMBER'S
WILDCAT STRIKES, THE LABOR SCENE LAST MONTH WAS TRANQUIL.
AN ON-AND-OFF STRIKE AT ORTF CONTINUED TO DISRUPT RADIO
AND TELEVISION PROGRAMMING; THE GOVERNMENT HAS SO FAR
REFUSED TO BUDGE FROM ITS REORGANIZATION SCHEME, WHICH
IS COSTING OVER 200 EMPLOYEES THEIR JCBS. (AT THE
BEGINNING OF JANUARY, ORTF WAS FORMALLY DISSOLVED INTO
THREE AUTONOMOUS TELEVISOR CHANNELS AND A SEPARATE
RADIO NETWORK.) ALTHOUGH THE SIX-WEEK POSTAL STRIKE
OFFICIALLY ENDED DECEMBER 2, MAIL SORTERS CONTINUED A
WORK SLOW-DOWN DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE CHRISTMAS RUSH,
SOME 19 MILLION PIECES OF PRE-STRIKE MAIL REMAINED
UNDELIVERED (REF C). IN GENERAL, STABILITY ON THE
LABOR FRONT REMAINS DEPENDENT ON THE RANK AND FILE'S

FEAR OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND ITS ABILITY TO CONTINUE
EXTRACTING A SHARE OF RISING (THROUGH INFLATION) NOMINAL
PROFITS.

5. CHIRAC TAKES HELM OF UDR: DECEMBER'S MOST DRAMATIC
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT WAS PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC'S
ELEGANT SEIZURE OF POWER IN THE GAULLIST (UDR) PARTY
(REF D). ALTHOUGH THE "MAJORITY OF THE MAJORITY" --
WITH 172 SEATS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY -- THE UDR HAS
DRIFTED LEADERLESS SINCE CHABAN-DELMAS' CRUSHING DEFEAT
IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS LAST MAY. ONE MIGHT SAY
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THE UDR HAD LOST A NATION AND HAD NOT FOUND A ROLE;
SOME OF ITS SUPPORTERS (THOUGH FEW DEPUTIES) HAVE
BROKEN AWAY TO OTHER PARTIES IN THE MAJORITY, OTHERS
HAVE BEEN ATTRACTED TO THE MAVERICK MICHEL JOBERT (REF
E), AND A FEW ARE SEEKING TO JOIN THE UNION OF THE LEFT.
AT THE UDR NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING DECEMBER 14-15,
CHIRAC QUICKLY ASSUMED POWER BY ENGINEERING HIS OWN
ELECTION AS PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL AFTER PERSUADING
ALEXANDRE SANGUINETTI TO STEP DOWN. THE ISOLATED
GAULLIST BARONS ARE ATTEMPTING TO REGROUP AROUND
OLIVIER GUICHARD, BUT FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, CHIRAC
IS FIRMLY HOLDING THE HELM. HIS MANEUVER -- EXECUTED
WHILE GISCARD WAS IN MARTINIQUE BUT WITH THE PRESIDENT'S
PRIOR APPROVAL -- STRENGTHENS THE UDR'S ROLE IN THE
MAJORITY AND CHIRAC'S ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT. THE
EFFECT ON GOVERNMENT POLICY OF A STRENGTHENED AND
BOLDLY-LED GAULLIST PARTY REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT THE
IMMEDIATE RESULT OF CHIRAC'S COUP IS TO MAKE THE
PRIME MINISTER THE STRONG MAN OF THE GOVERNMENT, RIVALED
ONLY BY MICHEL PONIATOWSKI. CHIRAC IS ONLY 42 AND HAS
PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS; THOSE AMBITIONS CAN ONLY BE
SERVED BY HAVING A STRONG AND UNIFIED PARTY BEHIND HIM.
ONE LOSER IN ALL THESE MANEUVERS WOULD SEEM TO BE
JUSTICE MINISTER JEAN LECANUET, WHOSE HOPES TO INCREASE
THE RANKS OF HIS CENTER-REFORMER GROUP WITH DISSIDENT
GAULLISTS APPEAR TO BE CHECKED.

6. CENSURE MOTION DEFEATED AS PARLIAMENT ADJOURNS:
PARLIAMENT ENDED ITS FALL SESSION DECEMBER 20, WITH
THE GOVERNMENT VICTORIOUS ON ALL FRONTS. THE
CONTROVERSIAL ABORTION MEASURE, WHICH HAD PASSED THE
ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 29 (REF A), CLEARED THE SENATE IN
SLIGHTLY AMENDED FORM IN DECEMBER. BUT A GROUP OF 81
DEPUTIES HAVE CHALLENGED THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE
LAW, WHICH PERMITS ABORTIONS UP TO THE TENTH WEEK OF
PREGNANCY; ACCORDING TO THE OPPONENTS' SPOKESMAN'
GAULLIST FORMER MINISTER JEAN FOYER, THE LAW "CONSECRATES

THE RIGHT TO KILL". THE ISSUE IS BEFORE THE NINE-MAN
CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL, WHICH SHOULD RENDER ITS DECISION
BEFORE JANUARY 20. THE ASSEMBLY SESSION CLOSED WITH

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P R 071916Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 04 PARIS 00430

THE RESOUNDING DEFEAT OF A LEFT-SPONSORED MOTION OF
CENSURE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. THE SOCIALISTS HAD
INTRODUCED THE MOTION, WHICH THEY KNEW HAD NO HOPE OF
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PASSAGE, AS A GESTURE OF MILITANCY TO COUNTER COMMUNIST
QUESTIONING OF SOCIALIST GOOD FAITH IN MAINTAINING THE
UNION OF THE LEFT (REF F). SOCIALIST LEADER FRANCOIS
MITTERRAND'S RATHER DISPIRITED ASSEMBLY SPEECH WAS
TEPIDLY GREETED BY HIS COMMUNIST ALLIES, WHILE CHIRAC
RALLIED THE MAJORITY (DESPITE BRUISED FEELINGS AMONG
SOME GAULLISTS OVER CHIRAC'S ELECTION AS PARTY
SECRETARY GENERAL) WITH A STRONG IF UNINSPIRED SPEECH
ATTACKING THE LEFT'S COMMON PROGRAM AND DEFENDING THE
GOVERNMENT'S RECORD. NO MEMBER OF THE MAJORITY BROKE
RANKS TO JOIN THE LEFT, AND THE MOTION RECEIVED ONLY
183 OF THE 246 VOTES NECESSARY TO BRING DOWN THE
GOVERNMENT.

7. LEFT REMAINS DIVIDED: BOTH THE PCF AND THE PS HAVE
BEGUN PREPARING THEMSELVES FOR THE SOCIALIST PARTY
CONGRESS AT PAU' JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 2. FRANCOIS
MITTERRAND'S TOTAL PROCEDURAL CONTROL OF HIS PARTY HAS
BEEN SEEN AT EVERY LEVEL OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS,
WITH MITTERRAND-BACKED MOTIONS ROUTINELY WINNING BY
UNUSUALLY LARGE MARGINS. THE PCF, BASING ITS ACTIONS
ON A SERIES OF ARTICLES BY ITS SECRETARY GENERAL,
GEORGES MARCHAIS, BEGAN ATTEMPTS TO REDEFINE THE COMMON
PROGRAM OF THE LEFT IN TERMS WHICH WOULD PUBLICLY COMMIT
THE PS TO REFUSE A CALL TO POWER FROM A GISCARD
GOVERNMENT AND WHICH WOULD ALSO HAVE THE IMPLICIT
EFFECT OF LIMITING BOTH PARTNERS TO ENTRY INTO POWER
TO A TIME WHEN THEY COULD ASSURE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
COMMON PROGRAM IN ITS ENTIRETY. PS OFFICIALS HAVE
PUBLICLY BEEN RATHER RESTRAINED IN THEIR COMMENTS, AND
HAVE REFUSED TO ENGAGE IN A POLEMIC WITH THE PC. TO
THE EXTENT THAT PC ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE PS CONTINUE
TO BE MET WITH NO HEAD-ON CONFRONTATION BY THE PS, THE
CREDIBILITY OF THE LEFT AS A POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE
TO CHIRAC'S GOVERNMENT WILL BE UNDERMINED. IT IS ONLY
IN THE TWO PARTIES' REACTIONS TO THE PAU CONGRESS THAT
WE WILL SEE TO WHAT EXTENT THE UNITED LEFT CAN REMAIN

VIALE.

8. POSSIBLE CABINET CHANGES: RUMORS ARE RIFE IN PARIS
OF AN IMPENDING CABINET SHUFFLE -- NOT A MAJOR
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GOVERNMENTAL OVERHAUL, BUT THE CHANGE OF A FEW PORT-
FOLIOS WITH PERHAPS THE CREATION OF AN ADDITIONAL
SECRETARY OF STATE OR TWO. WE HAVE NO REAL EVIDENCE OF
GISCARD'S INTENTIONS, BUT THE RUMORS ARE SUGGESTIVE OF
THE CHANGING MAGNITUDE OF THE STARS IN THE FRENCH
POLITICAL CONSTELLATION. MOST RUMORS CENTER AROUND THE
EXPECTED DEPARTURE OF THREE CABINET MEMBERS WHO LACK A
POLITICAL CONSTITUENCY OF THEIR OWN. FOREIGN MINISTER
JEAN SAUVAGNARGUES IS SAID TO BE ON THE WAY OUT; HIS
HEALTH IS BAD, AND HIS PERFORMANCE REPORTEDLY HAS
SATISFIED NEITHER GISCARD NOR THE QUAI PROFESSIONALS.
HE MAY BE GIVEN THE WASHINGTON EMBASSY AS A CONSOLATION.
JACQUES SOUFFLET MAY ALSO BE EXPENDABLE; HIS LACK-
LUSTER WORK AS DEFENSE MINISTER HAS EARNED HIM
CRITICISM BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF THE ARMY. LIKE
SAUVAGNARGUES, HE IS SAID TO BE SUFFERING FROM POOR
HEALTH. LACKING A POLITICAL POWER BASE, HE MAY GIVE
WAY TO A STRONGER PERSONALITY; GAULLIST BARON OLIVIER
GUICHARD, FORMER PRIME MINISTER MESSMER, UDR DEPUTY
JOEL LE THEULE HAVE BEEN RUMORED AS POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS.
PIERRE LE LONG' SECRETARY OF STATE FOR POSTS AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS MAY BE DROPPED AFTER HIS SOMEWHAT
INEPT HANDLING OF THE RECENT POSTAL STRIKE. CHIRAC AND
PONIATOWSKI REMAIN THE STRONG MEN OF THE GOVERNMENT.
MINISTER OF HEALTH SIMONE VEIL HAS RISEN IN PUBLIC
ESTEEM OWING TO HER GOOD WORK IN SHEPHERDING THE ABOR-
TION BILL THROUGH PARLIAMENT; HER FACE RECENTLY ADORNED
THE COVERS OF AT LEAST THREE FRENCH NEWSWEEKLIES. JEAN
LECANUET, ALTHOUGH REPORTEDLY UNHAPPY AT SOME GOVERNMENT
POLICIES, WILL PROBABLY REMAIN AS MINISTER OF JUSTICE,
AT LEAST IN THE NEAR FUTURE. CHIRAC IS SAID TO BE
DISSATISFIED WITH MINISTER OF INDUSTRY MICHEL D'ORNANO'S
CAPACITY TO HANDLE WHAT PROBABLY IS THE GOVERNMENT'S MOST
COMPLEX AND POLITICALLY SENSITIVE DEPARTMENT. THERE IS
SOME TALK THAT JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER, WHO HAS
REMAINED PERSONALLY CLOSE TO GISCARD DESPITE HIS ABRUPT
DISMISSAL FROM THE GOVERNMENT ON JUNE 9 AS MINISTER OF
REFORMS, WILL RETURN TO THE GOVERNMENT TO HEAD A NEWLY
CREATED MINISTRY OF PLANNING. "PARIS MATCH", HOWEVER,

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P R 071916Z JAN 75

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 04 PARIS 00430

SAYS THAT J-J S-S WILL RUN FOR MAYOR OF NANCY IN 1975,
WITH THE BLESSING OF GISCARD BUT AGAINST THE WISHES OF
CHIRAC. J-J S-S, HOWEVER, IS HIMSELF SPREADING THE
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RUMOR THAT HE WILL BE THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER, A
SPECULATION NO ONE IS TAKING SERIOUSLY.

9. GISCARD SPEAKS TO THE NATION: GISCARD ENDED 1974 WITH
A BRIEF NEW YEAR'S EVE TELEVISION ADDRESS TO THE NATION
(REF G). REFLECTING WITH SOME SATISFACTION ON HIS
RECORD IN OFFICE, HE SAID HE HOPED 1975 WOULD BE A YEAR
OF FRATERNITY FOR FRANCE. HE SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIAL
ATTENTION THE DISADVANTAGED IN FRENCH SOCIETY, THUS
SUGGESTING THAT IN 1975 HE WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE THE
CAUTIOUS SOCIAL REFORM PROGRAM WHICH MARKED HIS FIRST
SEVEN MONTHS IN OFFICE. HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT FRANCE'S
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WOULD BE SOLVED AND THAT FRANCE
WOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT AND RESPONSIBLE
ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS. THE EVENTS OF DECEMBER NO
DOUBT FORTIFIED THIS OPTIMISM; 1974 -- A YEAR OF TRIAL
FOR FRANCE AND FOR EUROPE -- CLOSED ON A SLIGHTLY
RISING NOTE FOR THE FRENCH PRESIDENT. HOW FAR THIS
CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM WILL CARRY GISCARD INTO THE NEW
YEAR REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
RUSH

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